

TDVS Benefits Bulletin
23-11

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This month's bulletin is 1,006 words and will take a little less than 4 minutes of your time.

1 big thing: VA pauses collection of all established pension debts and the establishment of new pension debts.

Background: VA provides [pension payments](#) to wartime Veterans of low income and their survivors. These payments are based on income level, which is self-reported by the Veteran or family member who receives the payments. In addition to this self-reporting, VA has traditionally verified the recipients' self-reported income using data matching.

What VA is saying: Between 2011 and 2022, due to discrepancies in data matching, VA was unable to reliably verify the self-reported social security income of Veterans and survivors receiving pensions. When income verification resumed in July 2022, roughly 9,900 beneficiaries were determined to have higher income levels than self-reported. This resulted in VA pension overpayments which – in some cases – spanned many years.

There's more: As legally required, VA established debts for these Veterans and survivors. There are also approximately 30,000 additional Veterans and survivors who may have pension debts that have not yet been established.

Why it matters: Many of these Veterans and survivors are elderly, and all are low-income, so these debts represent a significant hardship.

What should I do: VA should contact impacted Veterans. You can also contact VA's Debt Management Center.

Here's more:

- [Benefits Bulletin 23-4](#) – TDVS flagged an issue with delayed VA/SSA income matches and offered advocacy advice and resources.
- [March 2022 Lunch & Learn:](#) Preparing Eligibility Verification and Medical Expense Report
- [2023 Spring Regional Training:](#) VA Debt Management Center

TDVS Updates

TDVS Town Hall



VETERANS TOWN HALL
JOHNSON CITY, TN
DEC. 5, 2023 — ETSU MARTIN CENTER
6 PM – 8 PM  **FREE FOOD**

1320 W State of Franklin Rd, Johnson City, TN 37614

Golden 24 – Phase II

TDVS is expanding your ability to use the Direct Submit and Digits to Digits (D2D) submission tools in VetraSpec. Many VSOs and CSOs currently use those tools to file the VA Form 21-22 (POA) and VA Form 21-0966 (ITF) directly to the VA.

Over the next several months, TDVS will be extending invitations to attend a training session that will allow you to file nearly all forms and documents directly with VA.

Be on the lookout for an opportunity convenient to you.

Tell me more:

- [Benefits Bulletin 23-8](#) – Background on “Golden 24” Initiative

Training Updates

What’s next: Here’s the training schedule for the remainder of the calendar year and a preview of 2024.

- Annual Examination, November 17th **or** November 20th
- **NO DECEMBER LUNCH & LEARN**
- January – Mandatory Quarterly Accreditation Training, TBD
- February - Lunch & Learn, Wednesday, February 14th, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST
- [2024 Training Schedule](#)

VA and Veteran Benefit Updates

Annual Cost-of Living-Adjustment

Veterans and survivors will see an annual cost-of-living adjustment of 3.2% in 2024.

This adjustment is effective December 1st and will appear in January 2024 benefit payments.

The big picture: The cost-of-living adjustment is determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Consumer Price Index and matches the one for military retirees and social security recipients.

I need more: VA’s benefit rate tables that reflect this adjustment will be published in December and will be shared in the next Benefits Bulletin.

VA to Cover Cost of Parkinson’s Care for Family Members of Veterans Who Served at Camp Lejeune

VA will cover the cost of Parkinson’s care for family members of Veterans exposed to contaminated drinking water at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune from August 1, 1953, to December 31, 1987.

This adds to the list of 15 conditions for which family members could receive health care reimbursement.

Here's more:

- [VA's Camp Lejeune Family Member Program](#)

VBMS – POA Electronic Notification Queue – Filter Enhancements

Survivor notifications generated from VBMS have been added to the POA electronic notification queue.

Flashback: As highlighted in [Benefits Bulletin 21-9](#), VBMS now provides accredited representatives electronic notification within VBMS when new documents are added to the eFolder of a veteran whom they represent.

Details: The initial release included limited filter capability. A later VBMS Update enhanced the POA notification queue filters by allowing users the ability to save customized filters, set a default filter and filter by POA within the notification queue.

Why it matters: This release continues to add to the functionality of a tool that can be used in providing service to Veterans. These [Release Notes](#) include step-by-step instructions for utilizing this feature.

Practice Like a Pro

Appeals to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA): When can I submit evidence?

The need to be mindful and follow the evidence submission rules of the selected BVA lane was highlighted by a recent Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) decision.

As a reminder: The evidence considered by the BVA will be the evidence that was in the record at the time of the decision being appealed. The record is closed after the rating decision. Evidence submitted after the decision is not considered, and additional evidence can only be submitted as described below:

- **Direct review lane:** No new evidence! The BVA will consider ONLY the evidence that was in the record at the time of the rating decision.
- **Additional evidence lane:** Can submit evidence with the 10182 and within 90 days of the BVA's receipt of the 10182.

- **Hearing lane:** Can submit evidence at hearing and within 90 days after hearing. (If hearing is withdrawn, evidence can be submitted within 90 days of request to withdraw)

I need more:

- [Cook v. McDonough, 36 Vet. App. 175 \(2023\)](#)

Advocate Spotlight

Please join us in welcoming Tennessee's newest accredited representatives:

Linette Castellanos, Montgomery County
Joanna Curbeloyero, Nashville Field Office
Justin Davis, Rhea County
John Griffey, Hamilton County
Michael Needel, Sumner County
Ashley Petersen, Rhea County
Sherry Pickering, TDVS
Hector Santos, Montgomery
Jerry Short, Clay & Jackson Counties

Congratulations on your completion of TDVS's Accreditation Course and TDVS accreditation!

Do you have an advocacy success story or something you'd like to see included in an upcoming bulletin? If so, [share](#) for a future bulletin.

TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the [VSO Tools](#) Portion of TDVS's Website

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